IN THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently amended) A communications system for providing media arbitration via a communications protocol using consecutive communication slots, the system comprising:

a plurality of communication nodes, each node being arranged ~~for~~ to communicate~~ing~~ frames of data with ~~the~~ other nodes of the plurality of communication nodes during a dynamic section ~~comprising~~ associated with communication of dynamic communication slots, and each dynamic communication slot having a communication slot number; wherein

each of the plurality of communication nodes ~~includes:~~ is arranged to communicate, when in use, in accordance with a time base comprising ~~consecutive timeslots~~ consecutively elapsing time units~~,~~ associated with the dynamic communication slots, each consecutive time~~slot~~ unit of the base comprising~~es~~ at least two elapsing sub-time ~~slots~~ units and a transmission action point located at a boundary between two of the at least two sub-time ~~slots~~ units, ~~such that~~ wherein the each of the plurality of communication nodes is arranged to start and end, when in use, transmission of each frame of data ~~starts and ends~~ at ~~a~~ the transmission action point associated with the time base; and

~~means for~~ a counter arranged to determine~~ing~~ a communication slot number operable to increment the communication slot number if no communication is ongoing at the end of a ~~time~~dynamic communication slot and to suspend incrementation of the communication slot number if communication is ongoing at the end of ~~a time~~ the dynamic communication slot.

2. (Currently amended) A communication node for use with a multi-node distributed communications system utilising a communications protocol using consecutive communication slots, the node being arranged ~~for~~ to communicate~~ing~~ frames of data with other nodes of the system during ~~dynamic communication slot of~~ a dynamic section associated with communication of dynamic communication slots, and each dynamic communication slot having a communication slot number~~:~~, ~~the node including:~~ wherein

the node is arranged to communicate, when in use, in accordance with a time base comprising ~~consecutive~~ consecutively elapsing time~~slots~~ units~~,~~ associated with the dynamic communication slots, ~~wherein~~ each consecutive time~~slot~~ unit of the time base comprising~~es~~ at least two elapsing sub-time ~~slots~~ units and a transmission action point located at a boundary between two of the at least two sub-time units~~;~~ ~~slots, such that~~

the node is also arranged to start and end transmission, when in use, of each frame of data ~~starts and ends~~ at ~~a~~ the transmission action point associated with the time base; and

~~means for~~ the node comprises a counter arranged to determine~~ing~~ the communication slot number operable to increment a communication slot number if no communication is ongoing at the end of ~~a time~~ dynamic communication slot and to suspend

incrementation of the communication slot number if communication is ongoing at the end of ~~a time~~ the dynamic communication slot.

3. (Currently amended) A method for providing media arbitration in a multi-node distributed communications system via a communications protocol using consecutive ~~dynamic~~ communication slots, ~~of a dynamic section,~~ the method comprising:

~~providing a system-wide time base of time slots, each timeslot comprising at least two sub-time slots and a transmission action point located at a boundary between two of the at least two sub-time slots;~~

each node of the system communicating frames of data with the other nodes during a dynamic section associated with the dynamic communication slots, each dynamic communication slot having a communication slot number; ~~wherein the transmission of each frame of data starts and ends at a transmission action point; and~~

providing a system wide time base comprising consecutively elapsing time units associated with the dynamic communication slots, each consecutive time unit of the time base comprising at least two elapsing sub-time units and a transmission action point located at a boundary between two of the at least two sub-time units and the transmission of each frame of data starts and ends at the transmission action point; and

each communication node determining the communication slot number by incrementing the communication slot number if no frame of data is communicated at the end of ~~a time~~ dynamic communication slot and suspending incrementation of the communication slot number if a frame data is communicated at the end of the ~~a time~~ dynamic communication slot.

4. (Currently amended) The system of claim 1, wherein the time base ~~includes~~ is associated with static communication slots.

5. (Currently amended) The system of claim 4, wherein a predetermined number of timeslots are utilised ~~for~~ in respect of each static communication slot.

6. (Currently amended) The system claim 1, wherein a dynamically allocated number of timeslots are utilised ~~for~~ in respect of each dynamic communication slot.

7. (Currently amended) The system of claim 6, wherein each dynamic communication slot in which frame transmission takes place is divided into alternating matching and mismatching time slots, the matching time slots being valid transmission slots.

8. (Currently amended) The system of claim 1, wherein each node comprises ~~means for~~ a receiver to ~~setting~~, when in use, a current communication slot number in response to whether a communication start is detected in a matching or mismatching time slot.

9. (Currently amended) The system of claim 1, wherein each node has an associated communication slot number and is operable not to transmit in dynamic communication slots having communication slot numbers different than the associated communication slot number.

10. (Currently amended) The system of claim 1, wherein each node comprises ~~means for~~ a transmitter to extend~~ing~~, when in use, a transmission to a transmission action point.

11. (Currently amended) The system of claim 10, wherein the transmission is by transmission of a busy signal.

12. (Currently amended) The system of claim 1, wherein each node comprises ~~means for~~ a receiver to adjust~~ing~~, when in use, the time base in response to a frame identity of a frame being communicated in a dynamic communication slot.

13. (Currently amended) The method of claim 3, wherein the time base ~~includes~~ is associated with static communication slots.

14. (Currently) The method of claim 13, wherein a predetermined number of timeslots are utilised ~~for~~ in respect of each static communication slot.

15. (Currently) The method of claim 3, wherein a dynamically allocated number of timeslots are utilised ~~for~~ in respect of each dynamic communication slot.

16. (Currently) The method of claim 15, wherein each dynamic communication slot in which frame transmission takes place is divided into alternating matching and mismatching time slots, the matching time slots being valid transmission slots.

17. (Currently) The method of claim 3, ~~wherein each node comprises means for~~ further comprising:

setting a current communication slot number in response to whether a communication start is detected in a matching or mismatching time slot.

18. (Currently) The method of claim 3, wherein each node has an associated communication slot number and is operable not to transmit in dynamic communication slots having communication slot numbers different than the associated communication slot number.

19. (Currently) The method of claim 3, ~~wherein each node comprises means for~~ further comprising:

extending a transmission to a transmission action point.

20. (Currently) The method of claim 19, wherein the transmission is by transmission of a busy signal.